

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-02

SAJ-01 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 OMB-01

PRS-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 MC-02 /064 W

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P R 211212Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5728

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 2007

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT: OPTION POSSIBILITY

1. REPLYING TO QUERY FROM DCM ABOUT PRESS REPORTS THAT NETHERLANDS WOULD BUY ONLY 84 F-16S INSTEAD OF THE PLANNED QUANTITY OF 102 MOD INFORMATION DIRECTOR SLIGHTING SAID HIS MINISTRY WAS NOW PREPARING ITS REPLACEMENT SUBMISSION FOR CABINET APPROVAL IN TERMS OF A FIRM BUY OF 84 F-16S WITH AN OPTION TO BUY AN ADDITIONAL 18. HE EXPLAINED THAT ONE OF THE F-104 SQUADRONS WAS USED FOR RECONNAISSANCE AND WAS NOT DUE FOR REPLACEMENT UNTIL 1983. MOD THINKING WAS THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO FIND A LESS EXPENSIVE PLANE TO PERFORM THE RECONNAISSANCE FUNCTION OR ALTERNATIVELY, AND WITH NATO'S AGREEMENT, TO SHIFT THE NETHERLANDS AIR FORCE RECONNAISSANCE RESPONSIBILITY TO ANOTHER NATO ALLY. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES MOD AUTHORITIES FELT THERE WAS NO NEED TO COMMIT THE GON NOW TO THE PURCHASE OF A FIFTH SQUADRON OF F-16S.

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2. SLIGHTING INSISTED THAT THIS WAS NOT RPT NOT TANTA-

MOUNT TO REDUCING THE GON'S ORDER FOR F-16S. INDEED, THE NETHERLANDS MIGHT END UP BUYING THE FULL QUANTITY OF 102 PLANES. HE NOTED THAT THE GON HAD USED THE SAME OPTION PROVISION REGARDING ITS RECENT PURCHASE OF SOME 800 FMC ARMORED INFANTRY FIGHTING VEHICLES. DCM ASKED WHETHER IN ADDITION TO ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS THE OPTION PROVISION WOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO OVERCOME THE RESISTANCE OF THE LABOR PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY GROUP TO THE PURCHASE OF THE F-16. SLIGHTING REPLIED THAT IT WOULD MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO CONTINUE TO OPPOSE THE PURCHASE.

3. WELL-PLACED FONOFF SOURCE GAVE POLITICAL COUNSELOR VARIATION OF THIS RATIONALE, NAMELY THAT SAVINGS ON 18 PLANES WOULD BE PUT INTO A RESERVE AGAINST POSSIBLE USE SHOULD A EUROPEAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY FORM AND BE IN A POSITION TO DEVELOP A REPLACEMENT FOR THE NETHERLANDS' NF-55 AND OTHER FIGHTER AIRCRAFT THAT WILL NEED TO BE REPLACED SEVERAL YEARS HENCE. THIS IS ONE OF LABOR PARTY DANKERT'S PET SCHEMES, AND MOD ACCEPTANCE OF IT MAY REPRESENT THE COMPROMISE TO WHICH HE ALLUDED JUST BEFORE THE LABOR PARTY CONGRESS. LIKE SLIGHTING, OUR FONOFF SOURCE THOUGHT IT WAS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE NETHERLANDS WOULD IN DUE COURSE PICK UP THE OPTION FOR THE ADDITIONAL 18 PLANES.
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